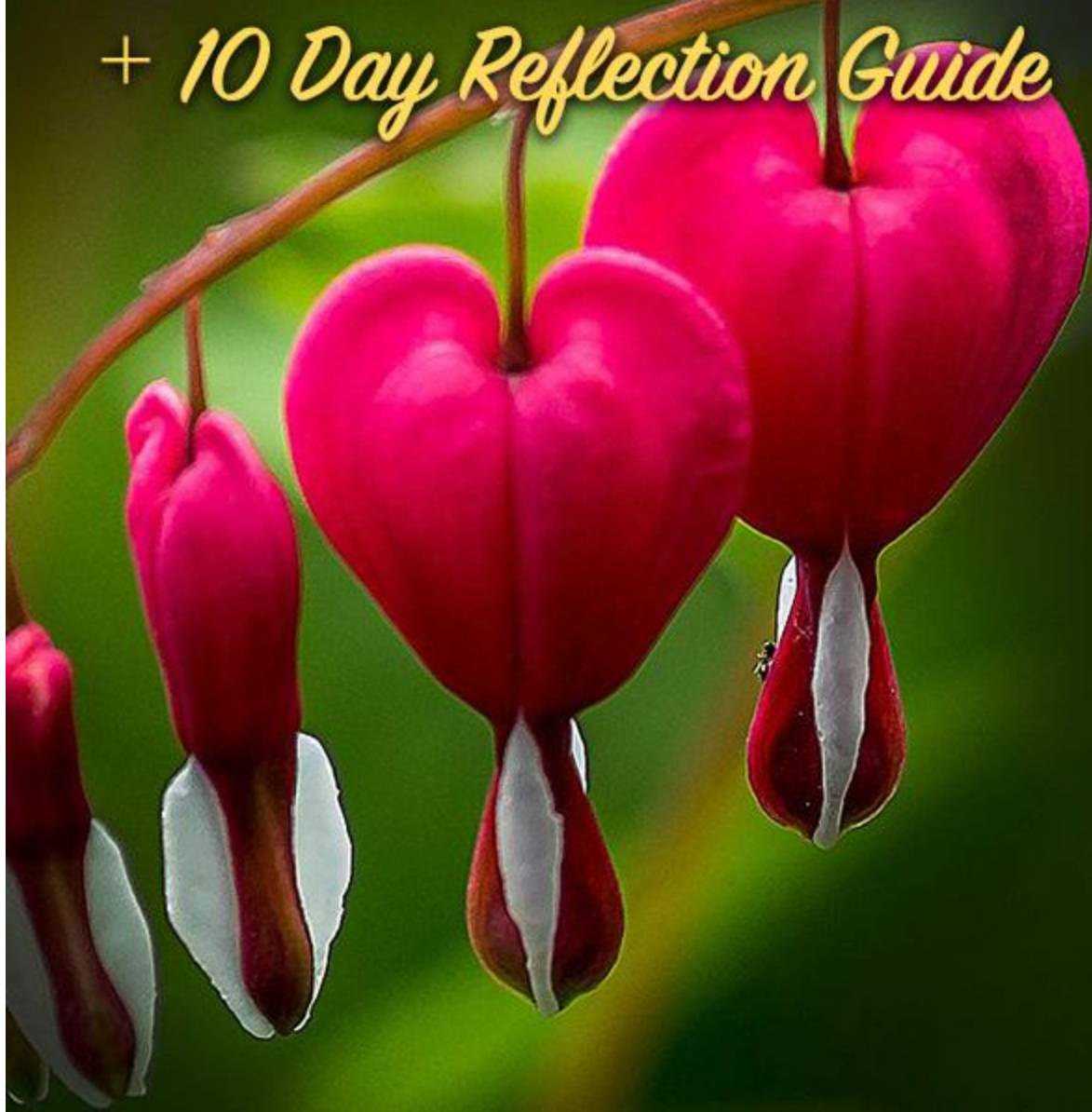


Adult Grief Booklet

+ *10 Day Reflection Guide*



Gina Peotter | info@hopeshousewi.com

Introduction

I'm proud of you for taking a step to see how you can move forward your healing journey. This booklet was created to reach MORE people where they are...at their own pace, in hopes of healing and growing.

Grief is not something to get over. It is not something that needs fixing, but with the right tools it can make your healing journey healthier and more meaningful.

These booklets are written to help explain that you are not alone in your grief journey, and hope to provide some information and action items for healing.

"A recent study, done before this pandemic by Amerispeak and WebMD, found that 57% of Americans are grieving the loss of someone close to them over the last three years. That means every other person you see is grieving — because grief never really goes away."

At Hope's House we noticed a common theme of adults putting all their time and effort into getting the kids any help they need, and putting their own needs on the back burner. This can result in delayed grief healing. In a national study done by the National Alliance for Grieving Children, 20% of the families polled had a parent that was not getting grief help for themselves. This resulted in kids having:

1. Higher levels of anxiety
2. Some behavior issues acting out in the home
3. Lower self-esteem

This is why it is important to take time for yourself and to work on your own grief journey.

These booklets are published monthly to keep grief healing at the top of mind. This includes new articles and content each month, as well as a NEW 10 Reflection guide every month. I hope you find value in these booklets, and would love your feedback. If you would like to look back at past months booklets visit www.hopeshousewi.com for a free download.

What you can expect from this booklet:

Real talk from people who have gone through a tough loss.
No SHOULDs (you should do this...)

Sending healing thoughts your way,
Gina Peotter

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www.hopeshousewi.com

Grief Support Specialist- Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home

www.muehlboettcher.com

Bleeding Heart

If you noticed the cover of this book it is a flower called the bleeding heart. I thought it was fitting for the season of Spring and for it's name in association with grief. That is what our hearts do. I lived through this a few times in my life now. I've seen friends and family members live through this as well. My guess is you are like me and we have both lived through one of the worst days of your life, the day they died. For me, my world stopped, but everyone else's world did not.

My heart has been bleeding for the past 12 years, but it has been slowly repairing the more I did the work. By doing the work I mean, working through my grief. I'm a thinker, I like to process things by connecting the dots, getting answers and understanding how things work. Not everyone is like me and that is why there are so many different programs out there. After my dad died when I was in college, I pushed my emotions to the side. I ignored my sadness, loneliness, depression, anxiety... and grief. It wasn't until five years later when my mom unexpectedly died, that I realized I never dealt with my grief.

I grew up pushing my feelings down and not processing them. So that is what I did with grief. How was I supposed to know that would come back to snowball my grief? It was after my mom died that I decided to go to an in person grief group. I told my story to complete strangers and I cried! It had been years and years that I cried over the death of my dad. I thought about him everyday and still do, but I kept my emotions at bay. Who wants to cry?! Little did I know my heart was bleeding all those years and I didn't acknowledge it.

I started reading books about grief. I started looking up grief groups on Facebook and connecting with friends who also lost a parent. Then I reached out to a counselor because I realized how crappy I really was feeling all those years. I also started writing about my grief. We all process emotions and grief differently. We are all unique, just like our grief. Our hearts bleed at different paces and different amounts.

My hope for you is you take some time to analyze if you are ignoring your bleeding heart. Some people jump right into processing their grief, when others are in a numb phase and it takes awhile to get out of the fog. Whenever that time comes when you are ready to try something new to work through your grief, just remember to be proud of yourself.

Action Item: Here is an exercise to take a baby step into something new:

Do one thing different each day for five days.

Take a new route to work. Listen to a different genre of music in your car. Turn the tv off this evening for one hour. Go take a walk outside. Make an appointment with a counselor. Take a shower in the morning instead of at night. Use a different shampoo. Write someone a letter. Do a five minute yoga video. Strike up a conversation with someone in the grocery store. Try kickboxing. Get a massage. Call a friend you haven't talked to in awhile (call not text). Try a new recipe. Check out something at the library. Donate to a charity. Try journaling. Watch the movie you have been avoiding. Look up grief resources in your area. Send someone flowers. Eat with your non-dominant hand. Go to a shooting range or axe throwing place... The point behind

this exercise is to get you out of your routine (and possibly your comfort zone). By doing this, your brain experiences new things, and breaks your patterns and habits for a short period of time. You might learn something about yourself, or even try something that might help you.

You can't change your current reality if you don't try.

Today I will: _____

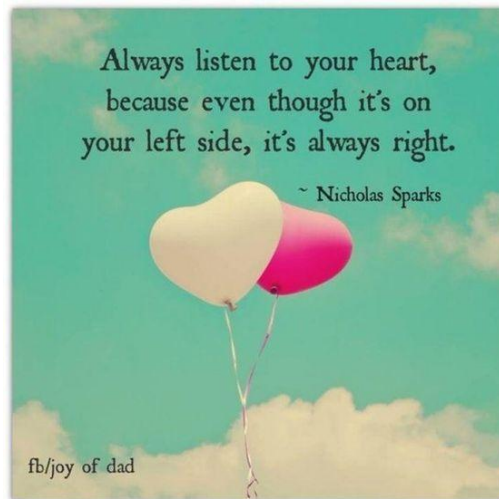
Tomorrow I will: _____

The third day I will: _____

The next day I will: _____

The day after that I will: _____

Things I learned or got out of this experience:



Unprocessed grief

“It only takes one person to make you happy and change your life: YOU”.
-iliketoquote.com

This can happen to many people and they don't even know it. It might seem like you are doing just fine because you don't cry or get bothered by things, but do any of the items below ring true to you?

- You don't want to talk about the death.
- You push memories or their things out of sight because it is painful.
- Avoid any groups, counseling, or education on grief because it would be painful.
- Avoid places that remind you of that person.
- Only fixate on their positives, avoiding their negatives, or vice versa.
- Put up a wall for others and shutdown when topics about death come up.
- Obsess over the person who died that it consumes your mind.
- Consume drugs or alcohol to unwind or avoid feelings.
- Constant need to be busy- when downtime causes anxiety.
- Have a running list of things you want to buy, and shop online or in a store most days.
- Avoid movies that you think will make you cry.

People who have gone through a tough death three months ago can have unprocessed grief. The same is true with someone who lost a loved one 20+ years ago. There is no shame in this. Many of us grew up sweeping feelings under the rug, because that is what your parents were taught to do.

If you have unprocessed grief there are a number of steps you could take to dig into the loss.

Ways you can take a step in processing your grief:

Seek out a grief counselor

Join a grief group

Start a journal and write or draw out what is going on

<https://www.hope-wellness.com/blog/20-journal-prompts-for-grief-loss>

Do something in memory of your loved one

<https://amagicalmess.com/honor-a-loved-one-acts-of-kindness/>

Rent a grief book, listen to a grief podcast, or grief meditation

<https://www.hopeshousewi.com/resources>

Connect with others who have gone through a similar loss. (Look up Circles in your app store)

Talk to your doctor/counselor/physician about suggestions and resources if you are feeling depressed, have anxiety or suffer from past trauma.

Action Item: One thing I realized (or am going to do) is _____

Anniversaries

You are one choice away from creating more peace in your life.

I always say there is always a holiday- the person who died birthday, an anniversary of the last time you _____ or the anniversary of the death, the anniversary of their burial, and holidays without your loved one. On the next page it has some suggestions about what you could do on the anniversary of the death and leading up to it. Most people say the anticipation of the date is worse than the actual day. For some they are completely fine leading up to it and the day comes and emotions are all over the place.

I've gone through what will be 11 deathiversaries since my dad died. Each year has been completely different for me. I personally think it has a lot to do with the season of life we are in and how well we are doing personally. The first anniversary was not good for me, I was a wreck and had to leave work early and take a half of a vacation day. The second year I was completely fine. Year three I was a mess again... years 4-5 were fine with no issues because I was numb to everything else in my life. After my mom died my dad's anniversaries held more emotion again for me.

Even as the years go on, anniversaries can still hit us hard sometimes. Then other times we might be just fine and are able to enjoy the day. It seems like grief itself sometimes. It may hit you like waves and other times you are just fine. Emotions may be heightened around a certain date on a calendar, just know it is ok to let your spouse/friends/family know you might be having a tough time because of the date. Most people around you might not know what significance that date or week holds for you.

Some people chose to do something for anniversaries in memory of their loved ones. This is a great thing to bring kids in on the idea. You could decide as a family what you would like to do:

- Have a favorite food day- all things they liked to eat
- Look through old photos/videos
- Visit the cemetery or bring their urn on a trip
- Make a playlist that reminds you of that person
- Buy a present for them and donate it to a local charity
- Have a pillow/quilt/bear made out of their clothing
- Simply do nothing and enjoy time together as a family

Don't let the comments of others saying you SHOULD do something for an anniversary, if you don't have the energy or want to do anything this year- skip it. My hope for you is that you find time to enjoy a bit of your day doing something that brings you joy.

Another article on Deathiversaries: <https://bit.ly/3bReUVj>

Action Item: Think of who else in your life might be affected by this date. Show them some love this year. Send them a text, card, call them up, or even ask if they would like to meet up sometime.

THAT TIME OF YEAR

An **anniversary** is a date that comes around every year that reminds you of a specific event.

For someone who has experienced loss, the anniversary of a special person's death can be challenging. When that time of year comes around, you might find yourself experiencing difficult emotions such as sadness, anger, or grief. Read below to learn tips on helpful ways of coping.

1. Talk About It

You may feel shutting down and not talking about your feelings with others. Remember that what you're feeling is normal, and there are others in your life that might feel the same way. It is helpful to be open with your friend and family members so that they can support you. Just being able to talk about it with someone can help you start to feel better.

2. Do Something Special

Take time out to do something special to honor the person you lost. You can cook their favorite meal, watch a movie that they used to enjoy, plant flowers, or create a memorial for them.

3. Visit Them

If you are able to, ask if you can visit the place where your loved one is buried. While there, you can have a conversation with them as if they were still here. Sometimes, it's helpful to believe that they can hear you. Tell them stories about yourself that they would love to hear.

4. Write a Letter

If you can't visit, then write them a letter. In this letter, you can tell them how much you love and miss them. Update them about your life events and everything that's happened since they've passed away. When you're done writing the letter, you can keep it somewhere special.

5. Do Things That Make You Happy

A helpful way of dealing with feelings of sadness or anger is to do things that make you smile and laugh. Watch your favorite shows, listen to your favorite songs, and put yourself around people that make you feel happy.

Focusing on the fact that this person is gone will only keep you sad and make it more difficult to cope. Instead, try to think of all the happy memories that you had with this person. Look through old photos to help you remember all the fun times that you had.



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Guided Journaling Questions

Take some time to really be honest with yourself. If you need to type out the answers and delete them so nobody sees. Or you can write it on a piece of paper and rip it into lots of pieces or even (safely) burn the paper. The goal is to not just put down some thoughts, but to be raw and real with yourself about these answers.

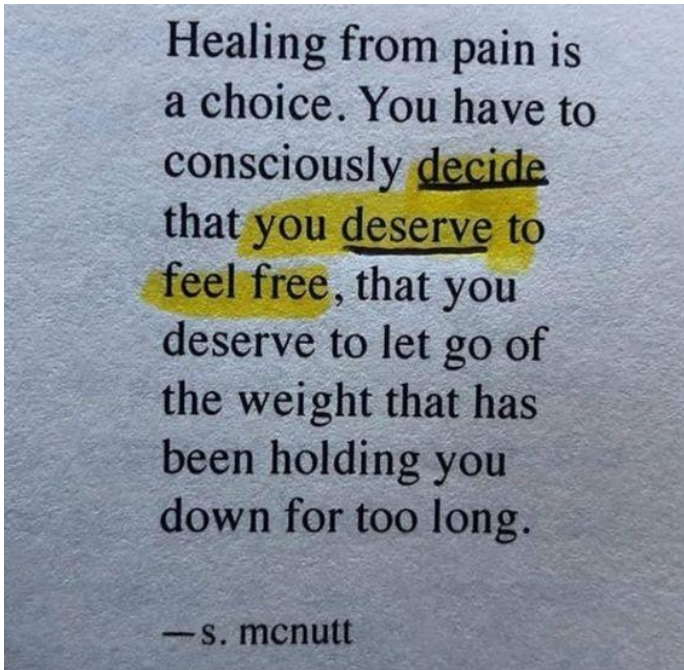
1. Name three things you are good at _____.
2. What do you admire most about your role model?
3. Explain what the best version of yourself would be like.
4. Have you helped another person through the death of someone close?
5. What do you want others to know about losing a loved one?
6. What is the happiest memory you have of the person who died?
7. What is the most interesting thing you have learned recently?
8. What is something difficult you should or need to ask help with?
9. What talents do you have that you share with others?
10. What is something/someone that triggers your anger and why?



Journal Questions or Talking Points for Kids

These questions can be used to start conversations with kids to dig deeper. Or they can be given to kids as journal prompts to use as their guided journal.

1. What age are you most looking forward to? Why?
2. What is your greatest talent?
3. What is the greatest gift you ever received?
4. Name someone in your life who always teaches you things.
5. What do you love most about your life?
6. What fears do you have?
7. What questions do you have about death?
8. What are you looking forward to?
9. What is your favorite season and why?
10. Do you think positively about yourself or negatively?



Healing from pain is
a choice. You have to
consciously decide
that you deserve
to feel free, that you
deserve to let go of
the weight that has
been holding you
down for too long.

— s. mcNutt

10 Day Reflection Guide- New Death

You can use these anyway you would like. Read them all at once and ponder the questions. Or you can take a few minutes each day to go through one. Another idea would be to read them together with someone else, and share your thoughts. These can also be used as journaling prompts, get out a journal, notebook, paper or computer and write out your thoughts... see where they may take you. This is designed to work anyway you want it to. The goal is to be true to yourself.

Day 1: *"He felt lighter than he had in weeks, and he realized that the monster he had been running from wasn't really a monster after all. It was simply that place in the heart that holds the measure of your history, the joy and the grief, the laughter and the tears, the magic and the wonder; all the ingredients that add up to the story of a life well lived."* - Lilli Jolgren Day, *The Wonder of Ordinary Magic*

The good, the bad, the ugly, happens to most people in life. It is what we do with our current circumstances that either propel us forward in life or leave us stuck for months... or even years. Sometimes our thoughts get in the way of leaving us feeling like a victim in life because of a death or situation.

👉Q: If you really stop and think, is there something that is holding you back?

Day 2: *"I had always turned to books, to knowledge, to help me get through everything in my life - and, sometimes, to escape it. But grief was a journey through a forest of razor blades. I walked through every painful inch of it - no shortcuts and no anesthesia."* - Michele Bardsley, *Don't Talk Back To Your Vampire*

The only way to move through grief, is really to go through it. That might be hard to hear, but by working through your grief is the only way to process it. Some people are not used to dealing with tough emotions, or many emotions at all. What you do with the small things you do with the big things... meaning if something makes you mad and you normally just push those feelings down and move on with life- that is what you are going to do with any anger around something big like grief.

👉Q: What are you going to do to get out of your comfort zone, to help you move forward in grief? *What's Your Grief website has a grief journaling course online*
<https://school.whatsyourgrief.com/p/30-day-grief-journaling-intensive/>

Day 3: *"Everyone who lives long enough to love deeply will experience great losses. Don't let fear of loss, or the losses themselves, take away your ability to enjoy the wonderful life that is yours."* - Barbara "Cutie" Cooper, *Fall in Love for Life: Inspiration from a 73-Year Marriage*

You might feel guilty about smiling, laughing or doing things you enjoy after the death of a friend or family member. That is a guilty feeling a lot of people share.

👉Q: If your loved one was sitting next to you today what would they say to you about how you are living life today?

Day 4: *"We hold on so tightly, because we're terrified of loss. We hold on till our hands bleed. And in that self-shattering persistence, we fail to see the answer: Just let go."* - Yasmin Mogahed

This may take time to be ok with it, and that's ok! Each person's grief journey is as unique as a person's relationship. Some people let go sooner than others. There is no timetable for grief. Some people start by letting go of some guilt around the death or an issue that came up. Others work through letting go of something tangible like clothing or a favorite item that someone else might enjoy. Remember... to celebrate that. By taking a small step that is a step forward in healing.

👉Q: Is there something small you could let go of this week?

Day 5: *"Happiness isn't about getting what you want all the time. It's about loving what you have and being grateful for it."* - Asher Roth

Gratitude can be tough especially when you are in the midst of sadness and grief. "The benefits of practicing gratitude are nearly endless. People who regularly practice gratitude by taking time to notice and reflect upon the things they're thankful for experience more positive emotions, feel more alive, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness, and even have stronger immune systems." [Read More](#) about the science behind gratitude. Another article by Berkley on how the [practice of gratitude changes your brain](#).

👉Q: How would you fill out a gratitude sentence?

I am grateful for _____ because _____
thank you, thank you, thank you!

Day 6: *"The whole world can become the enemy when you lose what you love."* - Kristina McMorris, *Bridge of Scarlet Leaves*

Some people find themselves mad at others and at the world after a death. Or that little things might upset them that otherwise wouldn't have before. That is ok. You have been through a lot, and many people feel this way after a death. A death is not fun, it's sad, hard, and most people are not prepared to go through the emotions they encounter. What you can do though is recognize your emotions or how you are viewing the world.

👉Q: How would you finish this phrase, "today things seem _____".

Day 7: *"And in the end it is not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years."* - Abraham Lincoln

Take a moment to reflect on the life of the person who died. Think about how they treated people, made you feel, or even memories you had with them. Now think through how you are living today, would the person who died be proud of how you are living your life, or disappointed in the sadness you are sitting in?

👉Q: How can you celebrate the life of your loved one this week?

Day 8: *"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."* - Mother Teresa

A community of people can be a helpful thing for some. Having a go to person to share what is going on in your life can be beneficial. Some people don't like unloading their feelings onto friends so decide to seek out a grief group or counselor. Others have found it helpful to start journaling to get their emotions out. Think through who your "pocket of people" are... and for some that might even be a pet.

👉Q: Who do you feel comfortable talking to about tough stuff? Who would be someone new you could try talking to?

Day 9: *"Shock is a merciful condition. It allows you to get through disaster with a necessary distance between you and your feelings."* - Lisa Kleypas, *Sugar Daddy*

Do you wish you still felt the way you did a month ago? You were numb and going through the motions of your life to just "get through" the obligations that come with the death of a loved one. Now, you're not shocked anymore, and the slow realization of the truth has moved into your psyche. This stage is tough, because it feels so final. Hang on and don't feel discouraged. It takes a lot of patience to work through the first few months after such a tragedy.

👉Q: How would you describe what you went through to a kid? By doing this we have to process a way to simplify our story we have in our head. It also allows us to take some of the severity out of a story as well.

Day 10: *"Don't miss out on something that could be amazing just because it could also be difficult".* - *livelifehappy.com*

I keep coming back to this quote, but it is on purpose. Change is difficult. Death is difficult. Healing can be difficult. That is the reason why a lot of people don't move forward through their grief. BUT difficult things can turn into something amazing. Amazing new relationships, amazing healing, amazing better feelings in our body and head...

👉Q: Would you be happy with your life if how you felt today was how you felt the rest of your life?

The habits you created to survive will no longer serve you when it's time to thrive. Get out of survival mode. New habits, new life.

10 Days of Reflection- 1 Year+

This section is intended for anyone over the year mark after a death. Not saying there is a time limit on grief, but most lives look a bit different days after a death vs a year or more out.

You can use these anyway you would like. Read them all at once and ponder the questions. Or you can take a few minutes each day to go through one. Another idea would be to read them together with someone else, and share your thoughts. These can also be used as journaling prompts, get out a journal, notebook, paper or computer and write out your thoughts... see where they may take you. This is designed to work anyway you want it to. The goal is to be true to yourself.

Day 1: *“Don’t let it break you. No matter how difficult things seem right now, life will go on, and you will survive”.* -Stay Strong

You might be at the point where things seem fine, but then a song or something will trigger your grief again. You will survive. If you ask the question, “what is this trying to teach me right now”, you move from a mindset of being a victim of your circumstance to a growth mindset.

👉Q: Think back to the last time you had a difficult situation- What was it trying to teach you?

Day 2: *“You cannot change what you refuse to confront”.* -Unknown

Mic drop! If deep down you know you have an alcohol problem, but don’t want to do anything about it... you will never change. If deep down you know you are having an issue with the death of someone, but do not want to call a counselor or seek help... well sorry to tell you nothing will change unless you make the effort.

👉Q: What is something that you really don’t want to confront?

Day 3: *“You cannot heal a lifetime of pain overnight, be patient with yourself, it takes as long as it takes to rebuild yourself”.* -livehappy.com

I love and dislike this quote so much. It makes complete sense, but at the same time I just want to push the fast forward button to make myself feel better.

👉Q: What do you wish you could push the fast forward button for? What would be the downfall of doing so?

Day 4: *“The struggle you’re in today is developing the strength you need for tomorrow”.* -Unknown

It can be hard to look at tough struggles as a positive aspect for your life. Take some time to think through past struggles and reflect on what strength you gained from it. This article talks about how you can see your struggles as lessons, growth or destiny. [Read more >](#)

👉Q: What do you see your current struggle as; a lesson, growth, destiny or just a problem?

Day 5: *“Your wound is probably not your fault, but your healing is your responsibility”*. -Denice Frohman

You are the only one who can choose to make your life happier or better. Your healing is your responsibility, not your spouse, parent or counselor... it is up to you to choose to make better choices, better words, better reactions to situations, or better healthier habits.

👉Q: What have you not taken responsibility for in the past?

Day 6: *“Don’t miss out on something that could be amazing just because it could also be difficult”*. -Live Life Happy

I keep coming back to this quote, but it is on purpose. Change is difficult. Death is difficult. Healing can be difficult. That is the reason why a lot of people don't move forward through their grief. BUT difficult things can turn into something amazing. Amazing new relationships, amazing healing, amazing better feelings in our body and head...

👉Q: Would you be happy with your life if how you felt today was how you felt the rest of your life?

Day 7: *“Fill your heart with gratitude and joy. There is still so much beauty and goodness in this world”*. -Unknown

Sometimes it can be hard to think about gratitude when you are grieving the loss of a friend or family member. “A five-minute [daily gratitude journal](#) can increase long-term well-being by 10%.” -Halo Recognition

Read more on gratitude in our March booklet <https://bit.ly/2ORuKXF>

Read more on the psychological behind gratitude
<https://www.happierhuman.com/benefits-of-gratitude/>

👉Q: What are five things you are truly grateful for today?

Day 8: *“The time will pass anyway. You can either spend it creating the life you want or spend it living the life you don’t want. The choice is yours”*. -Unknown

Life moves fast and slow at the same time. Oftentimes people are caught up in the day in and day out tasks and work. Then one day you wake up and realize something you were thinking about was a year or two ago already.

Fear is usually the robber of dreams, actions and trying new things. If you could cast away your fears about moving forward in your grief journey, or something specific in life... what would you do?

👉Q: How would you feel about your life if today was your last day, and you looked back at all you have done (or not done)?

Day 9: *“Sometimes you don’t realize the weight of something you’ve been carrying until you feel the weight of its release”. -Power Of Positivity*

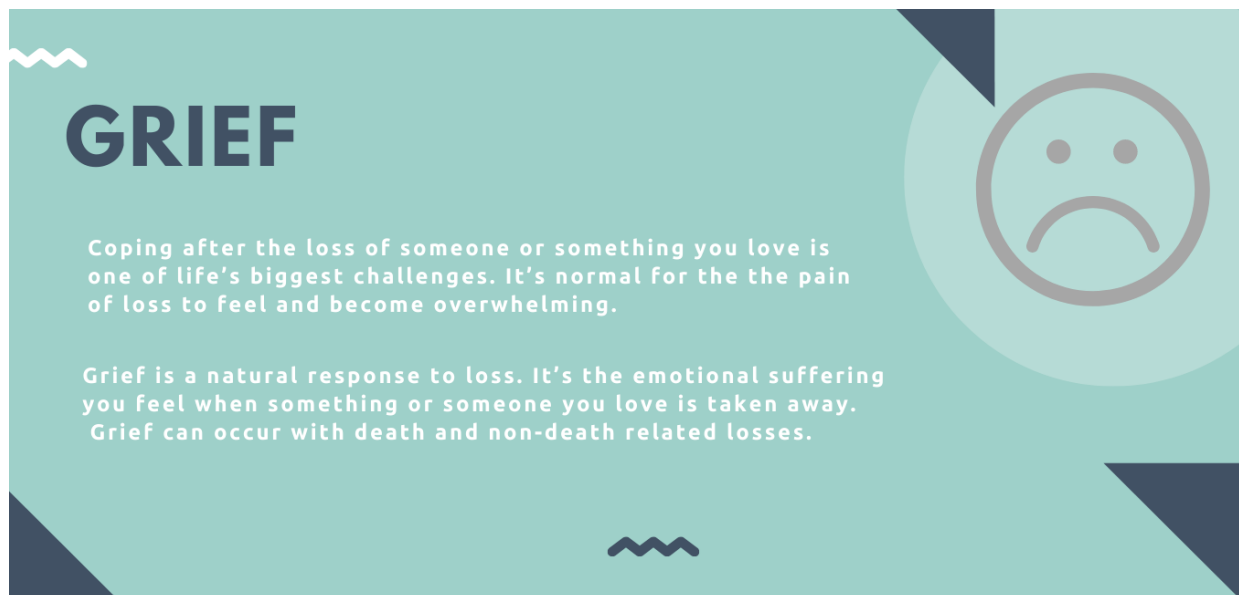
Many people are carrying really heavy things around all day and don’t even realize it. It could be something big like guilt or shame, or even chronic stress. Those things are heavy. So is grief. By pushing your feelings down it can also be extremely heavy. People sometimes realize what they are carrying is so heavy when they break down crying, or have a large anger fit over something... it isn’t until those emotions are revealed that they realize how much they haven’t dealt with or were carrying.

👉Q: If you could label something heavy in your life, what would it be? How would it feel to get rid of it forever?

Day 10: *“Perhaps the butterfly is proof that you can go through a great deal of darkness and still become something beautiful”. -Tiny Buddha*

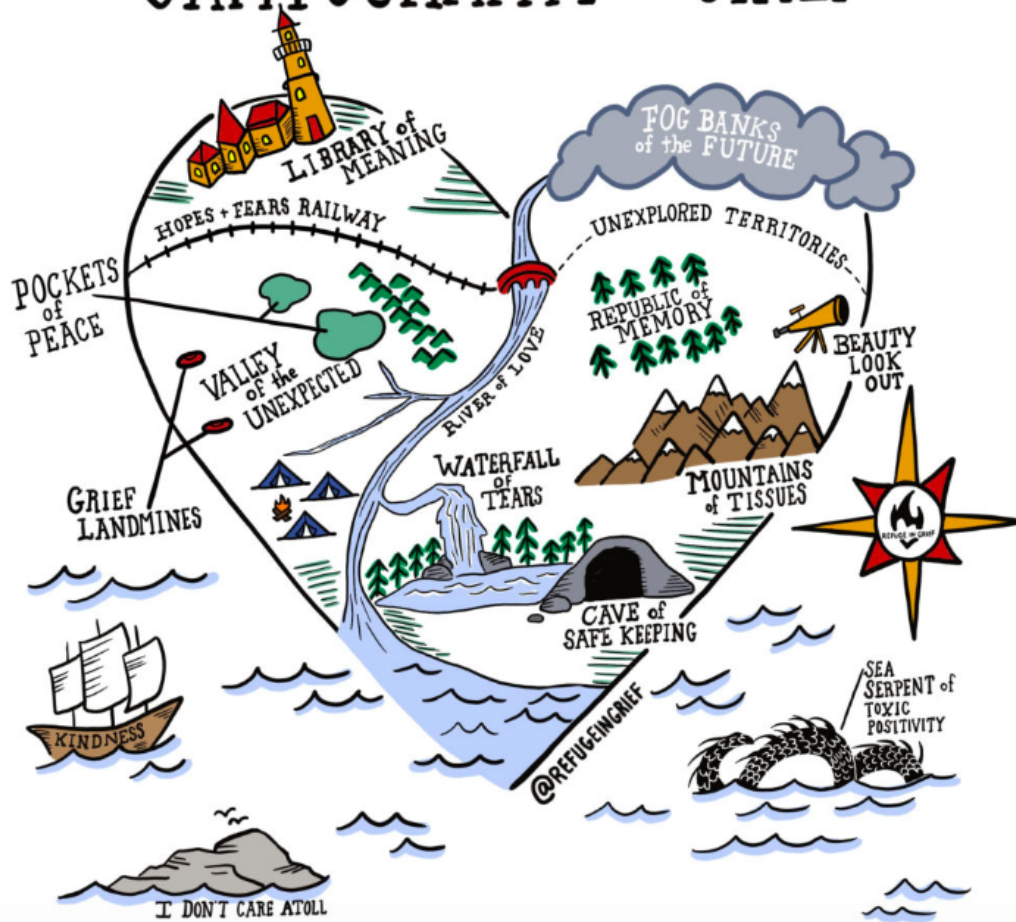
Some of the most wonderful people I have met in my life have been ones with a very damaged or hurt soul. This was because of things such as death, abuse, depression, and many dark days. The reason I share this with you, is to let you know it is possible to come out on the other side of a tragedy and dark mind. Your time on this earth can be happy and joyful, it is possible.

👉Q: What have you been keeping inside that you wish people understood?



Source: Western Oregon University

CARTOGRAPHY of GRIEF



Source: Psychology Today

Sources

Muehl-Boettcher Funeral home daily emails. You can sign up for those on their website www.muehlboettcher.com

Gina Peotter. Grief Support Specialist, Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home, Executive Director of Hope's House, February 17- March 23, 2021.

Hope's House- grief support for kids and families email us at info@hopeshousewi.com or connect with us on Facebook.

What's Your Grief- website filled with grief articles and topics for the bereaved. www.whatsyourgrief.com

This booklet is sponsored by Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home. To learn more about their quality service and family owned business visit the website www.muehlboettcher.com or find them on Facebook. They are located at 358 South Main Street in Seymour, WI 54165 and can be reached at 920-833-2328



About the Booklets

Find more booklets at the Hope's House website www.hopeshousewi.com. These are written every month by Gina Peotter, the Executive Director of Hope's House and the Grief Support Specialist at Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home.

About the Author

Gina is a Seymour native, she graduated from Seymour High School in 2003. She then went on to complete her Bachelor's Degree from UW-Stout and Master's Degree from Concordia University-St. Paul. She also holds her Grief Support Specialist Certification from UW-Madison.

Gina and some peers started a non-profit in 2018 called Hope's House in the Greater Green Bay area that focuses on free grief support for kids ages 4-18 and their families, and is currently the Executive Director. Gina has written and published a grief book called, ["It's Ok Not To Cry"](#) based on her own life story, and the story of others who have gone through a tough death. She currently writes and publishes a free Adult Grief booklet and Reflection Guide each month available at the Funeral Home or an electronic version on the Hope's House website.

After going through the death of her parents when she was in her 20's, and numerous other friends and family members she started on a path to helping others find hope in dark times. Gina is the Grief Support Specialist at Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home and is available to the families they serve, to help find the right resources to help navigate life after the death of a loved one.

Gina loves helping others any way she can. She was awarded the WPS Volunteer of the Year Award in Leadership in 2020 for her work with Hope's House. She also is a volunteer at Camp HOPE- camp for grieving children in the Stevens Point area. She volunteered at the Boys and Girls Club- Fox Valley Center for Grieving Children for a number of years, was a Hospice volunteer through Aurora, and a meal prep volunteer at numerous homeless shelters in the area.

"The greatest good is what we do for one another". -Mother Teresa

Find More Grief Resources

Website: www.hopeshousewi.com/resources